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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

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Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/61/50 and Corr.1

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I. Introduction

1. On 8 December 2005, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/94, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", by which, inter alia, it called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the necessary conditions for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region, and encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms. The Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society. Furthermore, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

2. In this connection, a note verbale dated 28 February 2006 was sent to all Member States requesting their views. To date, the Government of Algeria, Bolivia, Morocco and United Arab Emirates have replied and their responses are contained in section II below. Any replies received subsequently will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[25 May 2006]

Algeria believes that the issue of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region requires a collective strategy based on Euro-Mediterranean partnership and cooperation, promoting any initiative to make the region a zone of sustainable peace, stability and prosperity.

In a context of relations of trust and good-neighbourliness, forging security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region should reflect respect by the States in the region for the principles of State sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and the right of the region's peoples to self-determination. This calls for full adherence, as underlined in General Assembly resolution 60/94, to the

principles of non-interference, non-intervention, non-use of force or threat of use of force, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Algeria welcomes any initiative to promote security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region and hopes to contribute positively to the efforts to establish sustainable stability and prosperity in the region. It regularly and actively takes part in the various regional forums for dialogue, such as the Barcelona Process, the Mediterranean Forum, the Five Plus Five framework, and cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Algeria views Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on the European Security and Defence Policy, begun more than two years ago, as an additional consultation forum for addressing regional concerns and enhancing cooperation in matters of security. Algeria is convinced that the security of the Mediterranean region is inseparable from that of Europe and believes that this dialogue should include security issues and the legitimate concerns raised by the countries of the southern Mediterranean.

Algeria also contributes to the Five Plus Five framework both in the meetings of the Ministers of the Interior and those of the Ministers of Defence. The framework also demonstrates member countries' awareness of the magnitude of the peace and security challenges in the region, which require a global and concerted approach. In that connection, the most recent meeting held on 12 December 2005 in Algiers resulted in the adoption of concrete measures of cooperation for sea, land and air surveillance, primarily covering intervention in case of natural disaster.

Within the framework of the NATO Mediterranean dialogue, Algeria has been working, since it joined in March 2000, to promote positive and constructive dialogue for the consolidation of the peace and collective security of the Mediterranean region. In particular, it is advocating a balance between political and operational aspects. In that connection, when the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, at its spring plenary session from 27 to 31 May 2005 in Ljubljana, voted to grant associate member status to Algeria, it made it possible for Algeria to participate more actively in the committees and subcommittees of the Assembly.

Algeria has contributed to political dialogue through its participation in meetings held by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Brussels in December 2004, the Ministers of Defence in Taormina (Sicily) in January 2006 and the Chiefs of Staff in Brussels in May 2006.

The cooperation of Algeria with OSCE has also been guided by the fundamental principle that security in the Mediterranean region and security in Europe are inseparable. The political dialogue among OSCE and the Mediterranean countries primarily takes place in the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna through the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation in order to facilitate the interchange of information of common interest and propose new cooperation relationships.

Within the group of Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, Algeria is advocating unified responses to the risks and challenges facing Mediterranean countries, including terrorism, transnational organized crime, trafficking and illicit trade in arms, racism, xenophobia, migration and economic disparities.

Algeria also attaches particular importance to regional disarmament efforts, which will contribute to attaining the United Nations goal of general and complete disarmament. In this connection, it should be recalled that Algeria is party to all the international and regional legal instruments on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It also actively participates in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In this context, a regional conference to support the implementation of the Programme of Action by Arab States was held in Algiers in April 2005.

Bolivia

[Original: Spanish]
[17 April 2006]

United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/94 adopted on 8 December 2005, reaffirms the primary role of the Mediterranean countries in strengthening and promoting peace, security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

Bolivia believes that creating an atmosphere of security and cooperation in any region will redound to the common good of the peoples, guaranteeing international peace and security, particularly in a region that is facing the scourge of international crime in its various forms.

Bolivia supports all efforts to achieve stability and development in the international community.

Morocco

[Original: French]
[19 June 2006]

Morocco has always believed that peace, stability and security in the Mediterranean region should represent strategic objectives to be achieved and constitute a common good to be promoted and strengthened.

The Mediterranean region faces challenges to security which are as varied as they are numerous. In addition to often chronic conventional conflicts, whether open or latent, and the heightened effects of certain global social phenomena, the Mediterranean region is also feeling the full effects of new, diffuse and violent threats, such as terrorism. Those challenges are not of course specific to the region but, when combined with other regional factors, they are exacerbated and take on added importance.

Development gaps, particularly between an integrated and prosperous Europe and a southern flank which is still developing and experiencing rapid population growth, exacerbate the social and economic problems facing the two sides. The economic disparities between the two sides of the Mediterranean speak volumes: average annual per capita income is $20,000 in the European Union countries but only $2,000 in the Maghreb and the Middle East. This economic gap between North and South in the Mediterranean region gives rise to and accentuates such troubling

phenomena as illicit trafficking and illegal migration, a situation which fuels tensions in the Mediterranean subregions.

In view of the extent and complexity of the migration phenomenon, Morocco, which is a country of origin, transit and destination, advocates a global approach to this question, which recognizes the collective responsibility of the parties concerned. It was in this spirit that it organized the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development on 10 and 11 July 2006 with a view to laying the foundations for regional action on the issues of migration and development.

Morocco, which cooperates both at the regional and international levels in the struggle against terrorism, welcomes the adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism by the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership at the summit held in Barcelona on 27 and 28 November 2005.

In this regard, Morocco believes that a Zone Free from Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East would represent not just an appropriate response to the security concerns of countries in the region, but also a step in the direction of general and complete disarmament.

International terrorism has unquestionably acquired a global dimension. The phenomenon has not spared the Mediterranean region, as evidenced by the attacks carried out in Djerba, Casablanca, Istanbul and Madrid. The fight against this insidious and unpredictable threat which has challenged the world order requires collaborative efforts based on a comprehensive and concerted approach aimed at achieving the total eradication of its causes and its various manifestations.

The lack of progress towards disarmament at the international and regional levels, together with the refusal of some countries to accede to multilateral non-proliferation conventions, has the potential to affect the climate of confidence and exacerbate the arms race in the region.

Moreover, the protracted crises which have become almost chronic (Balkans, Middle East) cannot help but affect security in the region. In that regard, the Middle East conflict continues to escalate, in spite of initiatives on the part of the international community and mediation efforts. This conflict is extremely damaging to the Mediterranean identity and is a powder keg which threatens the stability of the Mediterranean region.

Other challenges of an ecological nature, such as water scarcity and water stress in many areas of the Mediterranean region, could increase tension in the region.

Given the growing challenges to peace and security in the Mediterranean region and the benefits derived from a policy of openness founded on dialogue, shared management of regional issues and acts of solidarity, Morocco has, since the late 1980s, contributed to various initiatives aimed at the promotion of real cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

In this context, Morocco's cooperation with the Mediterranean countries has been a singularly positive one, because the Kingdom of Morocco prepared the way for or initiated a number of measures aimed at restructuring the Mediterranean strategic space and strengthening dialogue and cooperation between the two shores. Morocco has always sought to enrich the conceptual framework of Euro-

Mediterranean relations, adapt their institutional mechanisms and improve the operational effectiveness of Mediterranean regional collaboration and cooperation structures.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process) in particular, which is the most comprehensive and multidimensional initiative in that it addresses the question of security in the Mediterranean region in its various economic, political, cultural and social dimensions, is a fine example of such efforts.

The regional framework is complemented by abundant and varied bilateral relationships between Morocco and the European Union (EU). The long-standing, dense, robust and multidimensional nature of relations between Morocco and Europe has led the two parties to place their relations in the context of the "advanced status" requested by Morocco, which is fully in keeping with the European Union's new European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Mediterranean Forum, the 5+5 Dialogue and the Partnership with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reinforce and complement the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in a useful and relevant manner.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Mediterranean Dialogue, in which Morocco has participated since it was launched in 1994, provides an important framework for political collaboration, a satisfactory tool for practical cooperation and an essential conduit for information exchange. Morocco is also working to stabilize the Balkans with NATO in the International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR) and the combined civil-military cooperation (IFOR/SFOR) and with the European Union in the EU-led force (EUFOR), in which the Kingdom of Morocco is participating pursuant to the resolutions of the United Nations.

Within the framework of its cooperation with NATO, Morocco also took part in Operation Active Endeavour and was also the first country in the southern Mediterranean to host a meeting between the NATO North Atlantic Council and the seven Mediterranean Dialogue countries, which was held in Rabat on 6 and 7 April 2006.

Thanks to the growing number of collaboration and consultation mechanisms established with a view to promoting security cooperation in the Mediterranean region, there is a true sense of shared purpose, which should be accompanied by efforts to make optimal use of resources and means. Although the existence of such structures makes a positive contribution to regional security, their actions must be coordinated in order to avoid duplication and to develop synergies capable of reinforcing stability in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, the key to the establishment of a Mediterranean regional order founded on a truly balanced partnership is improving the sense of ownership of the countries on the southern shore with regard to these various structures and initiatives.

Morocco has always believed that the indivisible nature of security requires the adoption of a comprehensive and concerted approach capable of ensuring peace and security in the region and of transforming it into a region of prosperity for all, based on active cooperation and responsibility shared between Europe and the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

The concept of the indivisibility of security now calls for the circle of Euro-Mediterranean solidarity to be widened to include other neighbouring regions, particularly Africa.

The Kingdom of Morocco believes that the narrowing of the social and economic development gap and the establishment of confidence-building measures between the countries of the region should serve as a catalyst for the emergence of a stable and prosperous regional order which will evolve from security based solely on the concept of vigilance into truly integrated security for the benefit of all the peoples of the region.

It nevertheless remains true that only real political will on the part of the States of the region can contribute to overcoming the stereotype of the Mediterranean region as a "crescent of crisis" and restore it to its original role as a zone of peace and economic, human and cultural exchanges.

United Arab Emirates

[Original: English]
[14 June 2006]

The importance of strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region has been emphasized in the following areas:

- Combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations
- Fighting international and organized crime
- Preventing illicit trade in weapons
- Combating drugs